

SPECIAL CONVENTION

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL

CHURCH IN ILLINOIS,

FOR THE

ELECTION OF AN ASSISTANT BISHOP,

HELD AT

PEKIN, ILLINOIS, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1851.

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REPORT.

THE SPECIAL CONVENTION for the purpose of electing an Assistant Bishop for the Diocese of Illinois, met at Pekin, Tazewell County, on Monday, September 8th.

There were present, twenty-two Clergy, and Lay Delegates from twenty-five Parishes.

After the reading of Morning Prayers by the Rev. Mr. Worthington, and a collect and the lesser Benediction by the Bishop, the Convention was called to order and the Rev. Samuel Chase, D. D., took his seat as Secretary.

The list of Clergy entitled to seats was then handed in by the Bishop and the same having been read, and those present having answered to their names, the Bishop appointed the Rev. Messrs. Worthington, Clarkson and Morrison, a committee to examine, and report upon the credentials of lay delegates.

The Committee reported favorably upon all the credentials, save those of the two parishes of Providence and Morris—they not having yet been admitted to union with the Convention.

The matter of the admission of these two parishes to union with the Convention, was then referred to a committee appointed by the Bishop, composed of the Rev. Messrs. Raleigh, Pulford and Johnson, and Messrs. Henry Chase and Dr. Gillett.

The Rev. Mr. Worthington had no objection to the admission of the two parishes in question; but as perhaps there was just ground for a question as to the power of this Convention to entertain proposals not referring directly to the specific object of the call of the same, he did not wish to establish a wrong precedent.

The Secretary of the Convention then reminded the Rev. Mr. Worthington that as the delegates from the two parishes were not present, it was of no importance whether they were admitted or not.

Upon this declaration, (which, however, proved erroneous,) the Committee was requested to suspend business, and the Bishop proceeded to deliver his address.

In this, was set forth, most feelingly and forcibly, the pressing necessity of having an Assistant Bishop.

The address having been read, and the Convention having been declared open for business, Judge Treat of Springfield offered a resolution declaring the need of an Assistant Bishop, and proposing that the Convention should then go into the election.

To this resolution the Rev. Mr. Swope offered the following amendment:

“Resolved, That a committee of three clergymen and two laymen be elected by the House, to take into consideration the expediency of electing an Assistant Bishop at this time.

And also, to report upon what means have been or can be procured, for the support of such Assistant Bishop, if, in the opinion of said committee, such election is now expedient.”

This matter was then discussed by the Rev. Messrs. Swope, Worthington and Giddinge, and Messrs. Chickering and Parks.

The Rev. Mr. Swope admitted the plain, evident necessity of having an Assistant Bishop, but offered this amendment doubting the expediency, under the existing circumstances, of going into an election now, and by this Convention, assembled in the manner it was.

No fund having been provided for the support of an Assistant Bishop, he did not deem it proper that the Convention should thus improvidently elect one. In support of his position, the Rev. Mr. Swope cited the declaration of the Bishop, in his annual address to the Convention of 1848, and the report of the Committee appointed at the same time, to take the matter into consideration:

“No provision having been made for the support of the Episcopate of Illinois, the present Bishop looks with anxiety for some exertion on the part of the Diocese for the attainment of this important end; for it is not likely a second Bishop will accept an election to the Episcopate of Illinois, expressly not to expect any support from the same.

When adequate provision shall have been made, your Bishop stands

ready, according to the Canon, to call a special Convention for the choice of an Assistant Bishop."

The Committee, upon the Bishop's address in relation to an Assistant Bishop, made the following report, viz:

"The Special Committee appointed by this Convention, to take into consideration so much of the Bishop's address as refers to an election of an Assistant Bishop, beg leave to report the following resolutions, and ask the concurrence of the Convention, and the adoption of the same:

That it is with profound regret this Convention finds that the election of an Assistant Bishop has not been approved by the last General Convention of the Church; but as Churchmen, we feel ourselves constrained to submit to the decision of that Convention, as the whole matter rested in their discretion to sign, or withhold the testimonials requisite for the consecration of said Assistant Bishop. That in the opinion of this Convention, the necessity of an Assistant Bishop in this Diocese still exists; but that no encouraging prospect now presents itself of providing adequately for the support of an Assistant Bishop to aid our venerable Diocesan; and that they are therefore reluctantly compelled to decline the further consideration of the subject at this time.

S. Y. McMASTER, JOHN H. KINZIE,
W. A. GRIMSHAW, B. GILLETT,
JNO. T. WORTHINGTON.

On motion, the report was received and the resolutions adopted.

On the demand of several members the vote was taken by ayes and noes, as follows: Clerical votes cast, 15; affirmative, 12; negative, 3. Lay votes, Parishes, 9; affirmative, 8; negative, 1."

This view was ably supported by the Rev. Messrs. Giddinge and Uno-nius, and by Messrs. Chickering and Duncan, while "Jehovah Jireh," the glorious motto of the Diocese, was urged as the main ground of the expediency of the election at this time.

Still, that the expediency or in expediency might be calmly canvassed by a committee, and that the means, or the plan for raising the means of support might be reported upon by the same, the appointment of such a committee was asked.

Mr. Swope's amendment was lost; when C. C. Parks, Esq., of Waukegan, moved a re-consideration of the question, on the ground that a mem-

ber in good standing with this body, had desired an investigation, for the purpose of gaining information which it was proper he should have, and to which he, with the able supporters of his views, were fully entitled.

If there were any matters which this body desired to suppress, he was opposed to such suppression. If there was any disposition on the part of this Convention to stifle inquiry, he was opposed to such a disposition. There was to him a palpable determination on the part of the Convention to vote down proposals coming from a quarter which it already had become evident to the House, was in the minority; and, although he had voted against the amendment, he felt bound to say, that he wished fair and open dealing, and deprecated anything which should appear like a disposition to vote down fair and worthy proposals of any member or number of members of this Convention.

The motion was lost.

The original motion then came up for discussion, when Judge Treat offered as an addition or amendment to his original, a resolution embodying the second point of the resolution offered by the Rev. Mr. Swope. The consideration of this addition was postponed, and the original carried.

Subsequently, after some able discussion by Dr. Palmer and others, with the amendment offered by Dr. Palmer, "that said Committee report to the next annual Convention," the resolution offered by Judge Treat was carried.

A desire to go into the election was then expressed, when J. W. Duncan, Esq., of Chicago, arose and said,

He had in his hand a paper which he had hoped it would be unnecessary for him to offer. That it would be unnecessary was the wish of himself and others, but the evident determination of the majority, to do that which had been directed them to do, and that, in a manner betraying too plainly their consciousness of strength, and unwillingness to entertain fair proposals, compelled him to offer the following:

Whereas, It has come to the knowledge of several of the clerical and lay members of this Convention, that a secret Circular was presented to certain of the clergy of this Diocese for their signatures, previous to the call for this Convention now in session. This Circular stating, in effect, that the Bishop would call a special Convention, for the election of a specified candidate, provided a majority of the clerical votes could be secured for the candidate therein specified.

And also—*Whereas*, it is understood that this Convention is now called in consequence of the understanding on the part of the Bishop, that the majority of the clerical delegates are in favor of a certain candidate alluded to in the Circular before mentioned.

And further—*Whereas*, Monies having been tendered and distributed by the Bishop, and other parties, to, and among a *portion* of the clerical and lay delegates attending this Convention.

Therefore *Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to investigate whether any undue influence has been used or attempted, to secure the action of this Convention in the election of an Assistant Bishop.

The introduction of this preamble and resolution produced the most intense excitement.

The Rev. Mr. Kellogg begged that such a resolution would be withdrawn, and that it would not appear upon the records.

The Rev. Mr. Worthington argued that it could not be entertained unless responsible names were attached thereto, when Mr. Austin arose and demanded that it be received, as the person introducing the paper was a member of this body, was a person known in society, and had made himself responsible for the matter.

Upon this Mr. Duncan arose and said, that for the truth of the reports, or the criminality of those involved he could not vouch; but that so far as responsibility in offering the paper was concerned, he was fully prepared to meet it.

The Rev. Mr. DeWolf moved that the paper be laid upon the table—that it was not worthy of reception, and that the Convention should not entertain it.

The Rev. Mr. Kelly, however, arose and said, the matter was of too serious a nature. The charge had been made. The imputation had been cast. That unless the blemish was removed by investigation, the reputation of the body was not unsullied.

That a mere withdrawal of the paper or a rejection of the same, would not prove to the world the freedom of the Convention from the guilt and corruption insinuated and charged in the paper in question.

Nay, not insinuated. There were knowledge, understanding and fact, as the basis of the preamble. Three stern witnesses, standing ready to strip them of their gowns; and he, for one, was not prepared to lose his robes by the instrumentality of these same witnesses.

The Rev. Mr. Worthington then arose and demanded the investigation. He further demanded, that if any clergymen then in the Convention were guilty, they should be driven from the house.

Upon which, J. W. Chickering, Esq, obtained the floor, and stated, that with the deepest regret he had been compelled to allow the paper in question to be presented. That he had striven hard all day to avoid it, but that the evident condition of the Convention forced upon his conviction, from all sides, during the day, made it inevitable.

Still further, the proof now afforded him in the course pursued by the Convention, convinced him of the truth of the proof on which was based, first, his aid and consent to the drawing up of the document, and subsequently, his consent to the presentation of the same. Information regarding the various points involved, had been communicated to him from several reliable sources. He had mentioned the matter to older members of the Convention, and they clerical—who told him by all means to present it. He had not acted unadvisedly, and in order to show the ground of his action, he would proceed to say, that he saw before him two presbyters who told him they had “incontrovertible evidence” of the existence of the Circular, and had been informed of it by some who signed it. That moreover, he saw before him two presbyters to whom their expenses had been tendered by the Bishop. That he saw before him a presbyter and a lay delegate, half of whose passages had been paid by some one unknown. That he knew of parishes (but was personally unacquainted with the delegates,) the expenses of whose delegates had been paid.

That he saw before him one of the two presbyters to whom the Bishop had tendered money, who, on going to the office of public conveyance from his place of residence, was told, that his passage and that of others, was paid; but *by whom*, the agent was bound not to say.

That still further, he saw near him a worthy presbyter, in good standing, and who had not the means wherewith to come of himself, to whom no tender was made by hands known or unknown.

That facts of this kind, forming an accumulation of evidence which to his mind was insurmountable, led him to serious reflection, and compelled him to ask—If the money came from a proper source, why should the Bishop tender funds by letter, and the persons to whom the tender was made, find their passage paid by some one unknown?

If funds were provided, why should some be furnished with means—

and they able of themselves to defray their expenses—while worthy but needy ones were omitted?

All these facts, which were beyond doubt true, and most easily capable of proof, went far to show a condition of affairs which a Convention of the church of God should eschew.

In view of these facts and of his convictions, he must insist upon the investigation.

The Rev. Mr. Chamberlain then arose and said, that probably his being the son-in-law of Bishop Chase, would somewhat prejudice the Convention against the reception of anything from him, still he felt bound to say that the whole matter could be explained. The Circular alluded to was in his possession. A majority of the clergy had not signed it. That Bishop Chase had never *seen* it. That he had written several of the letters which were written, and that *money* had been *sent* to only one clergyman, and his vote they were sure would be cast against them.

With a few more remarks, during which, the Reverend gentleman indulging in personalities was called to order, the gentleman closed.

Mr. C. C. Parks, of Waukegan, obtained the floor, when the Bishop, after a few moments' consultation with Dr. Samuel Chase, asked Mr. Parks if he would give way to him, in order that he might make a few remarks. The gentleman yielded, when the Bishop said in substance as follows:

"My friends, if you will let me, I will tell you all about this matter. I was spoken to regarding the necessity of having an Assistant Bishop. I said that I felt the necessity, but that there is no use of calling a Convention, for it will not be united—You know how much difficulty there always has been.

I do not want any bickering and quarrelling. If you will unite upon some good man that I like, I will call a Convention. If you do not, I will not call one. I do not know whether I named the good, holy and evangelical man attached to our primitive church, who is now my choice, or whether he was named to me. But as soon as he was named, I said, 'Agreed! Agreed!' Yes! as soon as he was named, I said, 'Agreed! Agreed!' And now I want you to go on and give me this man.

Those advising with me assured me that there would be no differences, and that a majority could be secured. I then said, that if a majority could be secured, I would call a Convention.

But, my friends, I am too poor; I cannot enable my poor clergymen to come to the Convention. I must have means for this purpose. Some generous friends stepped forward and supplied the money.

Oh dear, oh dear! If I had known this, I would never have called you together. I feel like the snuff of a candle, and that I may at any moment be extinguished. Will you not, then, grant this my last wish? for, in all probability, we will never meet again. Now, my shoulders are broad and I can bear the blame, then do go on and elect the man I have asked."

The Bishop having finished his very pathetic explanation and appeal, omitting all allusion to the circular, many members of the Convention hoped the objectionable paper would be withdrawn.

Several friends of the Bishop privately begged that it might be recalled by those presenting it.

A presbyter who had furnished the "incontrovertible evidence of the existence of the circular" went privately to the supporters of the preamble and resolution and said that the Rev. Mr. Chamberlain offered to produce the Circular if the paper would be withdrawn.

At length amid protestations on all sides that the several parties speaking were not pledged and at the urgent pleading of the Bishop's friends Mr. Duncan arose, and as the Bishop had in his address acknowledged the facts on which the preamble was based, withdrew the paper. For which act the Bishop most fervently blessed him.

Rev. Mr. Worthington and others sprung to the floor when Samuel H. Kerfoot, Esq., of Chicago, arose and said:

That if the several gentlemen then claiming the floor would give way to him he would offer a resolution which in his opinion would be the means of producing that harmony and peace for which the Convention should so heartily pray.

That his sole object now was peace and unanimity. That he with several of his friends who had been compelled to offer the preamble and resolution had come to the Convention for the purpose of *electing* an assistant Bishop.

That they had endeavored to avoid the necessity of offering the paper just withdrawn but that the condition of the body there convened, and their determined opposition to all moves likely to bring about fair investigation had driven them to it.

Now however that an explanation had been made upon which they could be enabled to withdraw the paper, entertaining the hope that the Convention was prepared to allow the honest differences of opinion which did exist to be regarded, and with the firm conviction that by the adoption of the resolution which he held in his hand harmony and unanimity could alone be secured he would offer the following:

Resolved, That the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of the Diocese, the Rev. Messrs. Dresser and Giddinge, the Hon. Messrs. Bailhache and Treat with Mr. J. W. Duncan be appointed a Committee who shall *unanimously* suggest to this Convention the name of a person suitable for the office of Assistant Bishop and who will be likely to secure the universal suffrage of this Convention.

Mr. Duncan declined serving, when Dr. A. B. Palmer was proposed in his stead.

• Mr. Kerfoot accepted the substitution, upon which the Bishop most urgently said, "Do not have a committee! Do not have a committee! but go on and elect the man I have named; for if you do not, I will leave the house, and will never call you together again."

Mr. Kerfoot, however, insisted upon the method he had named. "Not for the purpose of electing a man who would be obnoxious to the Bishop; for, in order to avoid any such result, he had placed the name of the venerable Diocesan first upon the Committee named by him—but for the purpose of securing unanimity and harmony in the election; and afterwards, in the diocese.

There were those on that floor who could not, under any circumstances, vote for the gentleman named; both because of the manner in which he had been nominated, and for other reasons not mentioned that day."

The Bishop then desired that the word "unanimously" should be omitted in the resolution.

To this Mr. Kerfoot objected, on the ground that unanimity in the nomination was necessary in order to harmony in the election. And moreover in order that the whole body might feel that the *nomination* was their own *free and voluntary act*.

Mr. Austin desired to know the result of a failure on the part of the Committee to report unanimously. To this it was replied that the Convention would in that case stand where it then was; all the differences still existing.

The Rev. Dudley Chase then arose and favored the passage of the

resolution when the Bishop said, "Now Dudley sit down, do not say any thing to me about it. If you want a Committee I want to hear nothing more of the matter. Do not talk to me of peace. Do not say anything more only give me my choice." Mr. Chase however persisted respectfully and favored the plan of a Committee.

The question without farther debate was then called for and the resolution was adopted.

The house took a recess for the purpose of affording the Committee an opportunity to consult. The announcement having been made that the Committee was ready to report the Convention was called to order and the Bishop said,

"Gentlemen, as the Chairman of the Committee I beg leave to report that a majority have named the choice of the Bishop—the Rev. Dr. Whitehouse. I wish you would be pleased to receive this as their report and proceed to the election."

The Convention, in much noise and confusion, then proceeded summarily to the election; and, in reply to the question of a member, as to whether the report of the Committee was in accordance with the requirements of the resolution, the Bishop said, "A majority have reported—Four out of three." When Dr. Samuel Chase, or some one near the Bishop, suggested—"Four out of six." "Yes, four out of six," replied he.

No time was left for debate, and the ballots were cast, which resulted in the confirmation of the nomination.

A resolution was then offered declaring the person elected to be the unanimous choice of the Convention.

To this there was decided opposition expressed. After this it was moved that the Convention proceed to sign the testimonials.

The vote having been given in the affirmative, and no votes having been cast in the negative, the Bishop said that this circumstance might fairly be taken as an expression of the unanimous approbation of the election.

To this it was replied, that if the courteous silence of the minority was to be thus misconstrued, they would beg leave to vote.

The Rev. Mr. Worthington replied, that such was not the case, and that such construction would not be placed upon the silence. That those who signed the testimonials, of course signed them only as witnesses of the election, and not as approving of the choice.

The testimonials were then signed by a large majority of the members, and after a collect and prayer by the Bishop the Convention adjourned.

